

(b) PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO IDENTIFY JOBS

Fresno County Department of Employment & Temporary Assistance has been collaborating with a number of agencies/organizations in the private sector in order to work together on identifying jobs, addressing economic development and job creation issues. The following briefly outlines activities associated with these collaborative efforts:

Welfare Reform Task Force (WRTF) in October, 1996, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors charged the County Administrative Officer to create a Welfare Reform Task Force (WRTF) for the purpose of identifying potential impacts resulting from welfare reform implementation in our community. This Task Force created four focus groups to study conditions in the community and consider the potential effect of the changes occurring as a result of welfare reform legislation. These four focus groups were: Government and Legislative Issues; Needed Services; Special Populations; and Economic Issues. The recommendation of the Economic focus group included business development, incentives for hiring public assistance recipients, and continued community efforts to create the need for and maintain an area competitive for employment opportunities.

The WRTF membership included representatives from employer associations, faith community organizations, school districts, vocational training centers, non-profit organizations, large community employers, as well as a host of federal, state county and local government entities. This task force has recommended and promoted continued community input and involvement with other collaboratives working on economic development issues, job creation, and the identification of jobs in Fresno County.

Workforce Development Board – In November, 1997, the Workforce Development Board (a redesign of the Fresno Private Industry Council Board of Directors) was created to develop a stronger and more supportive connection with the private business sector. The Board's intent, among others, was to: (1) provide for a regional comprehensive system of planning and administration to promote efficient and effective use of regional work force development and other employment and training resources; (2) foster a partnership between the public and private sector for the purpose of providing services which are responsive to employer needs and which support economic development; and (3) strengthen the linkages between training and education, and job creation and economic development necessary to enable individuals to secure and retain employment.

The Board consists of twenty-seven members, the majority of which represent the private sector. Also included are member representing labor, community-based organizations, education, representatives from Fresno City and County, and elected officials from both the city and county.

E&TA staff worked closely with WFDB in developing Welfare-to-Work Request for Proposals and shared staff to participate in the proposal review process. This process has been beneficial in order to maximize available dollars, complement services and eliminate duplication.

WFDB awarded two contracts out of their Welfare-to-Work (WtW) Grant Program. These contracts were effective January 1, 1999. One project is a consortium, Fresno Neighborhood Network Project, and the other provider is Proteus. Both agencies will be working with the hardest to place individuals.

A continuing group was established to identify referral procedures for CalWORKs recipients to the WFDB WtW providers. Procedures have been established and are outlined in Policy & Procedures Guide Item 40-11-27 Specialized Employment Programs. E&TA began referring clients in February 1999.

CalWORKs recipients who are determined to be hard-to-place due to long term welfare dependency and multiple employment barriers may be referred to WtW specialized employment services. Once the client has been identified as meeting the WtW criteria, the client is referred to a specialized caseworker who will fully assess the client's situation and determine the appropriate referral. All referrals are made using a standardized referral form (ES97).

The WtW services complement the overall objectives of the CalWORKs program through the provision of activities intended to move individuals into lasting unsubsidized employment. The WtW agencies will provide the following services: behavioral modification workshops, group counseling, living skills, parenting/nurturing classes, job development, work experience/on-the-job training, job placement/retention services and relocation services.

Individuals referred are assigned a Case Manager who will monitor the participant's progress in the program, authorize supportive services and handle any program compliance issues.